

# How will zoning affect PRESERVATION OF GREEN SPACES?

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## ***What is meant by "green spaces?"***

There are five types of land that could be affected by development and would influence an area not "looking green" anymore. City and county regulations and programs address these spaces differently.

1. Unimproved portions of street edges;
2. Undeveloped areas within new housing developments maintained by a homeowner's association;
3. Vegetated areas on private property;
4. Pocket parks within subdivisions; and
5. Open space owned by public jurisdictions.

## ***What are the differences between City and County regulations for each type of space?***

- 1. Unimproved portions of street edges.** Both King County and Renton require landscape plans for new development.

King County	Renton
For lots being developed, King County currently requires that trees be planted at a rate of one tree for every forty feet of frontage along all public streets. These trees must either be located within the street right-of-way or within 20 feet of the street right-of-way.  Deciduous trees must have a minimum caliper of 1.75 inches and height of ten feet, and coniferous trees must be at least 5 feet high. Multiple-stemmed trees of at least six feet in height are also allowed, but not within the street right-of-way.  King County standards only require landscaping where attached (multi-family) residences abut single-family residences.	Renton requires at least two trees with a minimum caliper of 1.5 inches in the front yard or planting strip for lots being developed.  Renton's standards require 5 feet to 10 feet of new landscaping installed along road frontages for new single-family subdivisions in addition to the tree planting requirements. The amount of planting is determined by whether the road is a neighborhood access road (5ft. standard) or an arterial (10 foot standard).

- 2. Undeveloped areas within new housing developments** are usually critical areas, preserved in native growth protection tracts that are owned and maintained by a homeowner's association. Most trees that remain in a plat are in such areas. These are areas usually created through City or County critical areas regulations, and through clearing limits within zoning.

In 2005, **King County** repealed the Significant Tree Preservation Special District Overlay, which affected 81,000 properties in the unincorporated area because of the Critical Areas Ordinance (KCC 21A.24) and the Clearing and Grading Ordinance (KCC 21A.38) which apply Countywide. For urban areas, King County requires conifer trees greater than 8 inches in diameter and deciduous trees greater than 12 inches in diameter be retained or replaced. The rate of retention and/or replacement is a function of the intensity of development. Project sites with 25 percent or more of the total gross site area in critical areas, critical area buffers or other areas to be left undisturbed, such as wildlife corridors, are exempt from these urban tree retention standards. (Source: King County Critical Area Ordinance User's Manual)

**Renton** allows native growth protection area easements to be counted in the minimum lot size of lots created through the subdivision process, but they may also be established as separate tracts of land.

- 3. Vegetated areas on private property** are usually included in the yards of larger lots owned and managed by property owners. Some tree replanting regulations and clearing regulations may apply in this situation.

In King County and Renton, as part of a permit to develop land, trees may be removed and replaced with new plantings. However, both jurisdictions also allow for “set-asides” using native growth protection area easements. Typically this occurs when there are critical areas on the site that can not be developed. Both jurisdictions allow voluntary “clustering” of lots within a developed area and when this occurs, natural vegetation can be preserved, but the land still can be developed at its maximum zoned capacity.

**King County** currently requires that landscape material provided within areas of undisturbed vegetation give preference to using native plant species.

**Renton** has larger lot width, depth, and size standards so a larger land area would usually be included in subdivided lots, but there are no regulations in place that limit vegetation removal on these larger lots.

- 4. Renton** does not have regulations that specifically require tree preservation. Tree preservation is required as an administrative interpretation during review of subdivision applications. **Pocket parks within subdivisions** are typically developed with lawn, re-planted trees, and play areas and are owned and operated by a homeowner's association. These are usually developed areas and are not "natural" in terms of vegetation retention, but they do provide a neighborhood level park experience in many cases.

King County	Renton
Allows construction of pocket parks in lieu of mitigation fees paid by developers. Because King County lot size standards are smaller than Renton's, developers can still get the maximum number of lots and create a small parcel that meets the King County standards, so the density remains the same. Developers also get to count water retention tracts in this category. It is usually less expensive for a developer to build the park rather than pay the mitigation fee. King County regulations set standards that define how that occurs.	Doesn't require construction of pocket parks, but will approve them with partial credit toward required parks mitigation fee, when they are located in a place that fits with overall local parks needs. Renton only gives partial credit because a portion of the City's parks mitigation fee goes to fund citywide facilities. Since Renton has larger lot sizes and only gives partial mitigation credit, developers usually pay the mitigation fee and put the value into a large home lot.

- 5. Open space owned by public jurisdictions.** Neither King County nor Renton requires set-asides for open space owned by public jurisdictions.